



BLACK BOLT™

#12



MARVEL

**SALADIN AHMED
CHRISTIAN WARD**



is the king of the Inhumans, an off-splinter of humanity imbued with amazing abilities. But these gifts sometimes come with a price: Black Bolt's slightest whisper can shatter mountains. His voice has destroyed many lives, but it has saved countless others.

When the Silent King speaks, the world hears him.

Some time ago, Black Bolt was unlawfully imprisoned and tortured in an alien jail. He and his fellow prisoners broke free and destroyed their psychotic Jailer, but lost Bolt's new friend Crusher Creel, A.K.A. the Absorbing Man, in the process.

Black Bolt returned to Earth, accompanied by his teleporting dog Lockjaw and the psychic alien child Blinky, to bring the news of Crusher's death to his wife, the super villain Titania. While attending Crusher's funeral, they were ambushed by an Inhuman named Lash, who kidnapped Blinky. The ordeal triggered a change in her — a horrible transformation.

Inside of Blinky, the Jailer has lain dormant. And now, it's taken over her body and her powers.

Hoping to spare Titania, Black Bolt flew her far from the fight and abandoned her. But the Jailer is far too powerful, and Black Bolt is losing. His only hope lies in the spirits of Blinky and his son, Ahura, who have somehow manifested deep within his psyche to help him fight the Jailer. And Lockjaw intends to bring other help, as well: He teleported Titania to Parkwood Cemetery, where she found Crusher crawling out of his grave!

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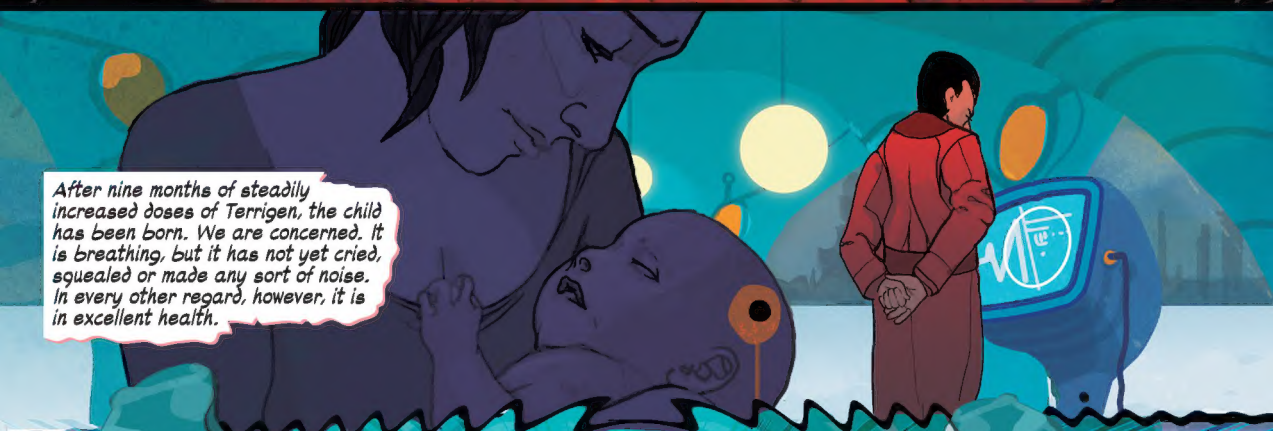
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Royal Scientific Journal of
Agon, King and Chief Scientist
of Attilan and All Inhumanity.

Our first readings after
exposing the fetus to
Terrigen are **remarkable**.
If the results hold, our
innovations in Terrigenesis
could unlock unprecedented
powers in future Inhumans.



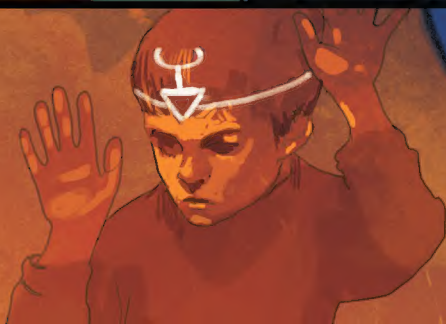
After nine months of steadily
increased doses of Terrigen, the child
has been born. We are concerned. It
is breathing, but it has not yet cried,
squealed or made any sort of noise.
In every other regard, however, it is
in excellent health.

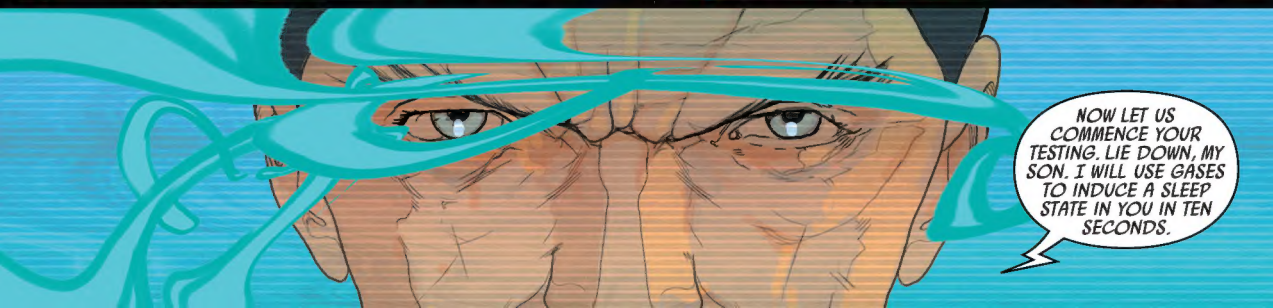
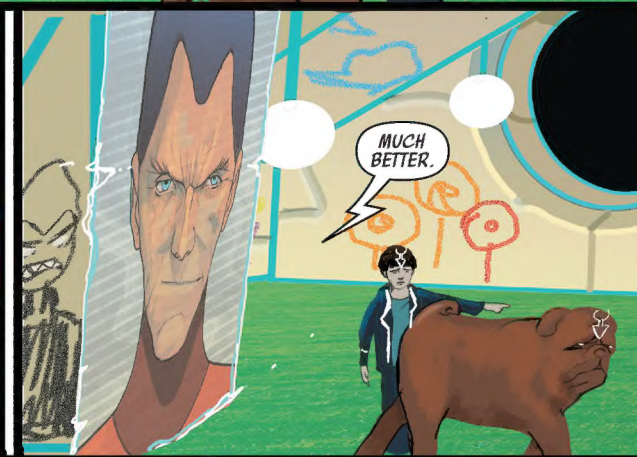
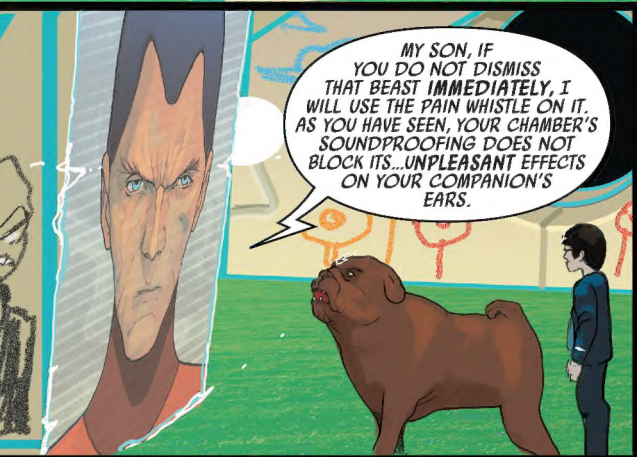
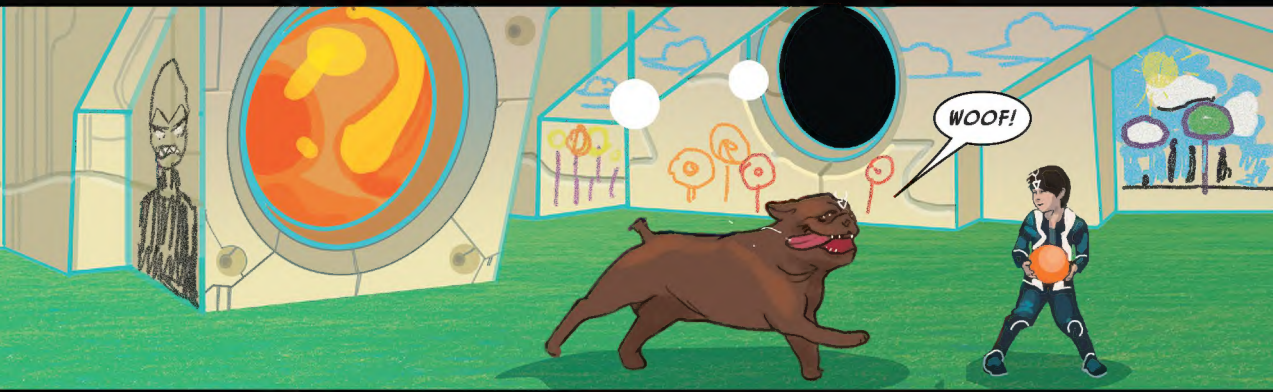


Today the child **spoke**. It would appear
that the process of in-utero Terrigenesis
has unlocked powers that are not only
unprecedented in our people, but
uncontrollable.



For the protection of
all Attilan, the child
must be **isolated**.







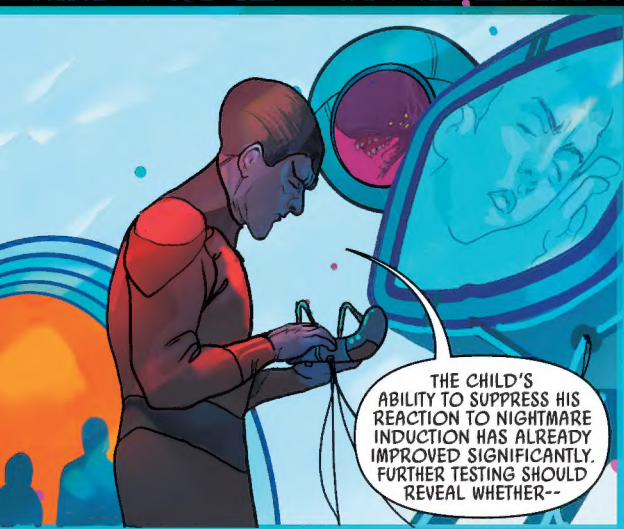
SO I GUESS I'M TRAVELING PSYCHICALLY THROUGH MY ABSENTEE FATHER'S MIND ALONGSIDE HIS NEW ADOPTED DAUGHTER. CAN'T WAIT TO TALK TO MY THERAPIST ABOUT THIS.

NEVER MIND.

YOUR WHAT?

SHHH--UP AHEAD.

THIS IS BAD, AHURA. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS PLACE IS--WHAT PAIN LIVES HERE-- BUT YOUR FATHER'S MIND HAS WORKED VERY HARD TO LOCK IT AWAY.



THE CHILD'S ABILITY TO SUPPRESS HIS REACTION TO NIGHTMARE INDUCTION HAS ALREADY IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY. FURTHER TESTING SHOULD REVEAL WHETHER--



AHURA, THIS IS REALLY SCARY. WHAT'S GOING ON?

THAT'S MY GRANDFATHER, AGON. CHIEF SCIENTIST OF OLD ATILAN AND KING BEFORE MY FATHER. THIS MUST BE SOME SORT OF PROJECTION OF MY DAD'S **MEMORIES** OR...SOMETHING.

I KNEW MY FATHER WAS ISOLATED AS A CHILD, BUT THIS...



...AGON EXPERIMENTED ON HIS OWN SON?! GAVE HIM NIGHTMARES ON PURPOSE TO TEST HIS CONTROL?!

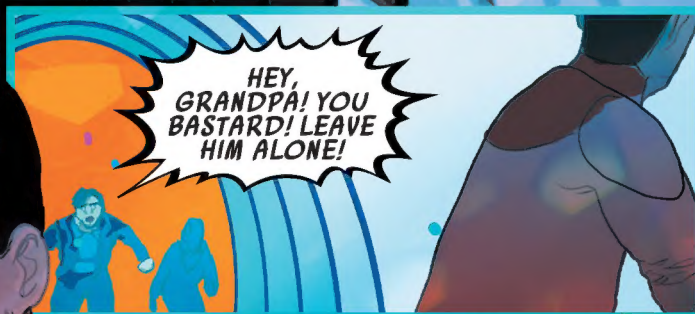
HE... HE WAS SO LITTLE.



I... I GUESS THIS ISN'T REALLY HAPPENING. IT'S JUST A MEMORY.

MEMORIES ARE REAL, AHURA. THE JAILER USES THEM TO KILL. WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.

YEAH. YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT.



HEY, GRANDPA! YOU BASTARD! LEAVE HIM ALONE!



FASCINATING....

WHAT THE HELL?

DEEPER INTO WHAT?

WE--WE'RE BEING PULLED DEEPER IN!



INTO
BLACK BOLT'S
NIGHTMARES!



THESE
THINGS LOOK
TOUGH!

GOOD THING
I NEVER TRAVEL
ALONE!

COOL
POWER, BUT
THEY STILL
OUTNUMBER
US!



LEAVE US
ALONE!



I... WAS
THAT ME? I DID
THAT?



I DID
THAT!



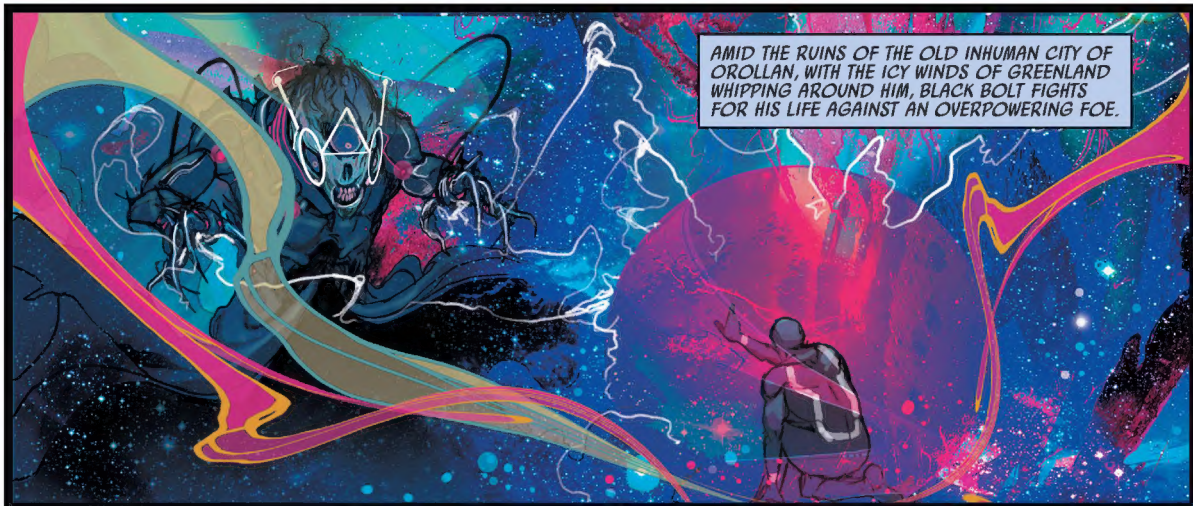
THEY'RE GONE.
WHAT WAS THAT YOU WERE
DOING? *MIND BLASTS?*
PRETTY BADASS.

I,
UH... I GUESS? I'VE
NEVER DONE THAT
BEFORE.



ARE YOU
OKAY, BLACK
BOLT?





AMID THE RUINS OF THE OLD INHUMAN CITY OF OROLLAN, WITH THE ICY WINDS OF GREENLAND WHIPPING AROUND HIM, BLACK BOLT FIGHTS FOR HIS LIFE AGAINST AN OVERPOWERING FOE.

WITHOUT EVEN MEANING TO, HE HAS CALLED OUT TO THOSE WHO MATTER TO HIM. IN A POISONED FEVER, MEDUSA--ONCE HIS WIFE BUT ALWAYS HIS QUEEN--CAME TO HIM.



AND NOW HIS SON, WHOM HE HAS REPEATEDLY FAILED, HAS COME TO HIS AID.



IT HAS TAKEN LONG YEARS AND DEEP WOUNDS FOR BLACK BOLT TO LEARN TO ACCEPT THE AID OF THOSE HE LOVES. HE IS GRATEFUL FOR IT NOW.

BUT HE IS TERRIFIED THAT IT COMES TOO LATE.

PARKWOOD CEMETERY.

AROO?

C-CARL?

IT'S ME, MARY! IT'S ME! I'M BACK!

YOU--
YOU'RE
ALIVE?

SOME LITTLE BIT
OF ME WAS TRAPPED
IN THAT BALL-AND-CHAIN.
I COULDN'T SEE OR HEAR,
BUT I COULD FEEL. IT
WAS *AWFUL*, MARY.

TOOK WEEKS
TO GATHER MYSELF
BACK TOGETHER. OH, GOD,
SWEETHEART, I CAN'T BELIEVE
I'M BACK. I'M HERE WITH YOU!

WELCOME
HOME, BABY.

DOLL,
YOU WOULDN'T
BELIEVE WHAT I BEEN
THROUGH SINCE
I LEFT.

ACTUALLY,
YOUR FRIENDS
TOLD ME ALL ABOUT
IT--WELL, *SHOWED* ME.
BLACK BOLT AND THE KID
WITH THE EYES. THEY'RE
IN TROUBLE,
CARL.

WHAT?

THAT THING
THAT LOCKED YOU
ALL UP--THE JAILER? IT
FOLLOWED YOU HOME. IT'S
IN GREENLAND, AND IT'S
GOT BLACK BOLT AND
BLINKY.

NO. NO
WAY, MARY. I KILLED
THAT THING. *NO WAY* IT LIVED.
NO WAY. NO NO NO
NO.

CARL,
BABY, CALM
DOWN!



I...MARY, IF THAT JAILER CREEP DID COME BACK HERE, I CAN'T-- I CAN'T SCRAP WITH HIM AGAIN. IT'S TOO MUCH.

CARL, WHAT'S GOING ON? I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU LIKE THIS.

THE THINGS HE DOES TO YOUR HEAD...I DON'T WANNA LEAVE MY FRIENDS, BUT I CAN'T LET THE JAILER TAKE ME FROM YOU AGAIN. I JUST...I WAS CRAZY TO GIVE UP COMING BACK TO YOU TO SAVE PEOPLE I BARELY KNEW.



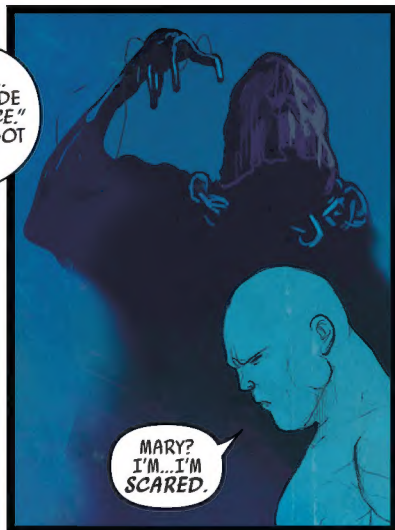
CRAZY? YOU WERE BEING A HERO. YOU WERE BEING THE GUY I KNOW YOU ARE. THE GUY THE REST OF THESE JERKS NEVER GET TO SEE.



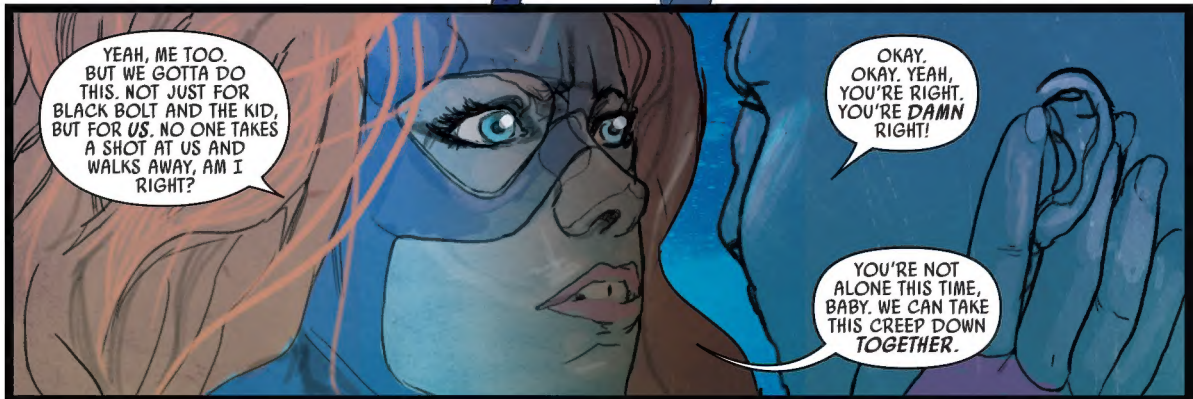
CAPTAIN AMERICA SPOKE AT YOUR FUNERAL. AND THOR. WELL, THE GUY WHO USED TO BE THOR.

CAPTAIN AMERICA? ARE YOU &\$@#& KIDDING?

I'M DEAD SERIOUS, CARL. HE SAID YOU MADE "A HERO'S CHOICE" LOOKS LIKE WE GOT A CHOICE TO MAKE NOW.



MARY? I'M...I'M SCARED.



YEAH, ME TOO. BUT WE GOTTA DO THIS. NOT JUST FOR BLACK BOLT AND THE KID, BUT FOR US. NO ONE TAKES A SHOT AT US AND WALKS AWAY, AM I RIGHT?

OKAY. OKAY. YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT!

YOU'RE NOT ALONE THIS TIME, BABY. WE CAN TAKE THIS CREEP DOWN TOGETHER.



WOOF!

WOOF!

LOCKJAW! GLAD YOU MADE IT BACK, TOO, POOCH! WE NEED TO FIND BLACK BOLT AND BINKY. CAN YOU TAKE US TO THEM?



COOL. ALL RIGHT, GUESS IT'S NOW OR NEVER.

LET'S DO THIS.



F-FATHER?

IT'S
THE JAILER!
RUN!

PENANCE!
PENANCE IN
DEATH!



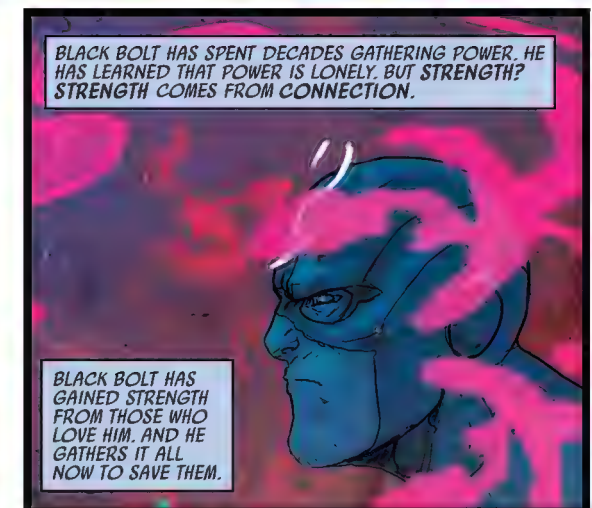
THIS
WAY!

DEAD END!
BUT THIS CORRIDOR
WAS OPEN A MOMENT
AGO--



LADY
PRESERVE ME.
IT HAS US...

NO
WAY. WE CAN
FIGHT THIS THING,
BLINKY. WE *CAN*.
WE WON'T LET IT
HURT ANYONE
ELSE.



I STILL SAY
WE SHOULD'VE
ROUNDED UP THE
WRECKING CREW
TO HELP.

FW
AUM

THIS AIN'T
THEIR FIGHT. BESIDES,
IF THAT JAILER JERK HAS
HOLD OF WISHBONE AND
THE KID, WE NEED TO GET
TO THEM **NOW**. EVERY
MINUTE WITH THAT
THING IS--

OOH. IS
THAT A LASER
GUN?!

ONE
OF LASH'S
FLUNKIES MUST HAVE
DROPPED IT
EARLIER.

WHO'S
LASH?

YOU KNOW
WHAT? NEVER MIND.
JUST GIVE ME A KISS
WITH THIS THING, WILL
YA? I COULD USE IT
TO BEEF UP BEFORE
WE SCRAP.

IF
YOU SAY SO,
HANDSOME.

AWW YEAH!
THANKS, DOLL.
NOW LET'S GO
FIND THAT--

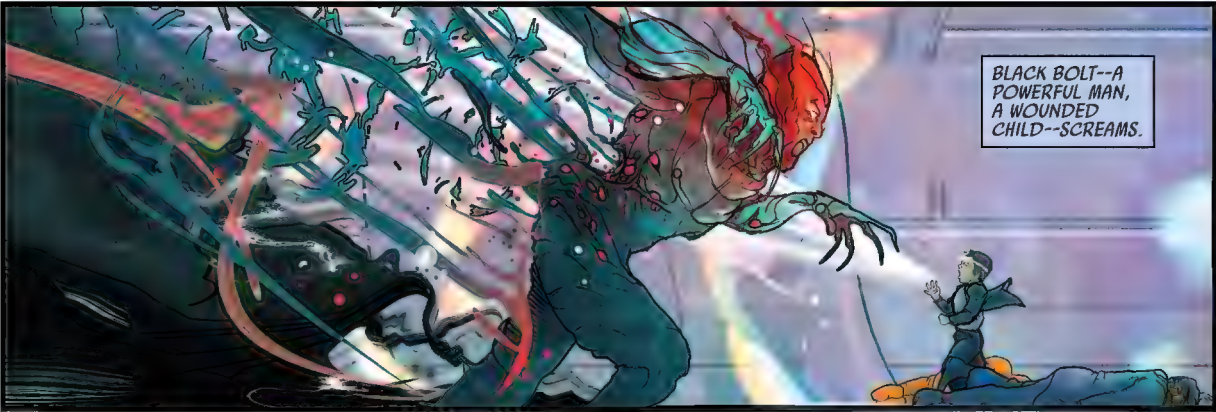
PENANCE IN
DEATH FOR YOUR
CRIMES!

I GUESS
WE FOUND
HIM.

WHAT THE HELL IS
THAT THING WISHBONE'S
FIGHTING? THAT AIN'T THE
JAILER. IT'S...IT'S
BLINKY.

IT...IT TOOK
OVER THE KID. I WATCHED
IT. IT WAS LIKE A HORROR
MOVIE, CARL. IT'S GOT
A HOLD OF HER.

ALL
RIGHT, THEN.
LET'S MAKE IT
LET GO.



BLACK BOLT--A
POWERFUL MAN,
A WOUNDED
CHILD--SCREAMS.

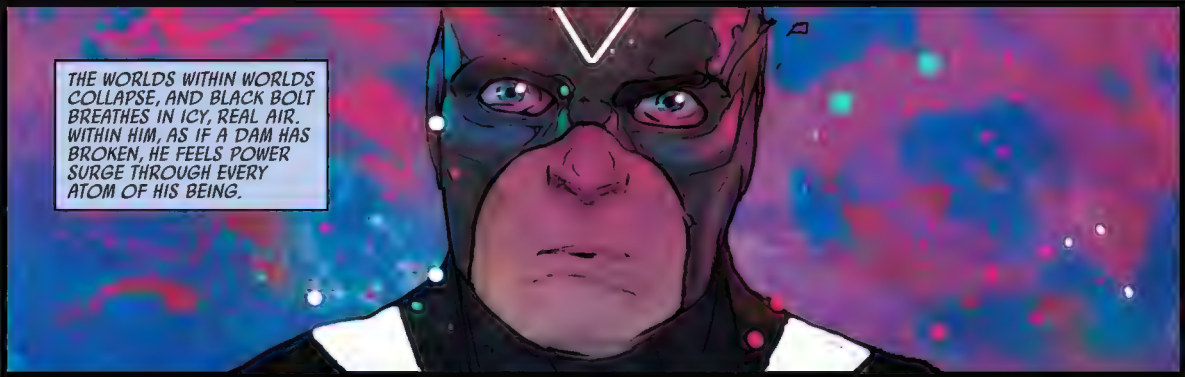


THE HORRORS BEFORE
HIM PEEL AWAY.

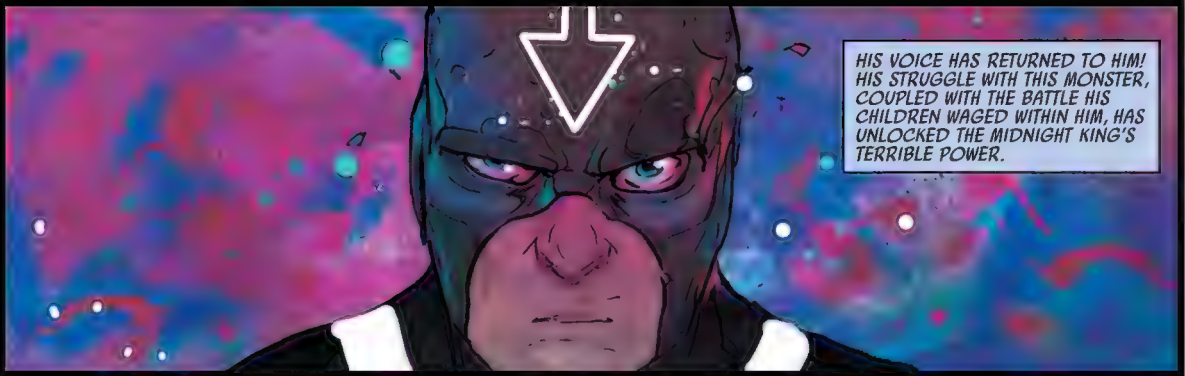


AND THE
WORLDS BEGIN
TO WARP...

...UNTIL MAN AND
CHILD ARE ONE
AGAIN.

A close-up of Black Bolt's face, wearing his mask with a white 'V' on the forehead. He has a serious expression. The background is a vibrant, swirling mix of blue, purple, and pink, resembling a nebula or a cosmic storm.

THE WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS
COLLAPSE, AND BLACK BOLT
BREATHES IN ICY, REAL AIR.
WITHIN HIM, AS IF A DAM HAS
BROKEN, HE FEELS POWER
SURGE THROUGH EVERY
ATOM OF HIS BEING.

Black Bolt's face is shown with his eyes glowing a bright, intense blue. A white arrow points down from his forehead. The background remains the same cosmic swirl.

HIS VOICE HAS RETURNED TO HIM!
HIS STRUGGLE WITH THIS MONSTER,
COUPLED WITH THE BATTLE HIS
CHILDREN WAGED WITHIN HIM, HAS
UNLOCKED THE MIDNIGHT KING'S
TERRIBLE POWER.

A close-up of Black Bolt's face with his eyes closed. The background is the same cosmic swirl.

AND HE PREPARES
TO UNLEASH IT.

Black Bolt is shown with his mouth wide open, shouting. His face is contorted with effort. The background is the same cosmic swirl.

BUT...

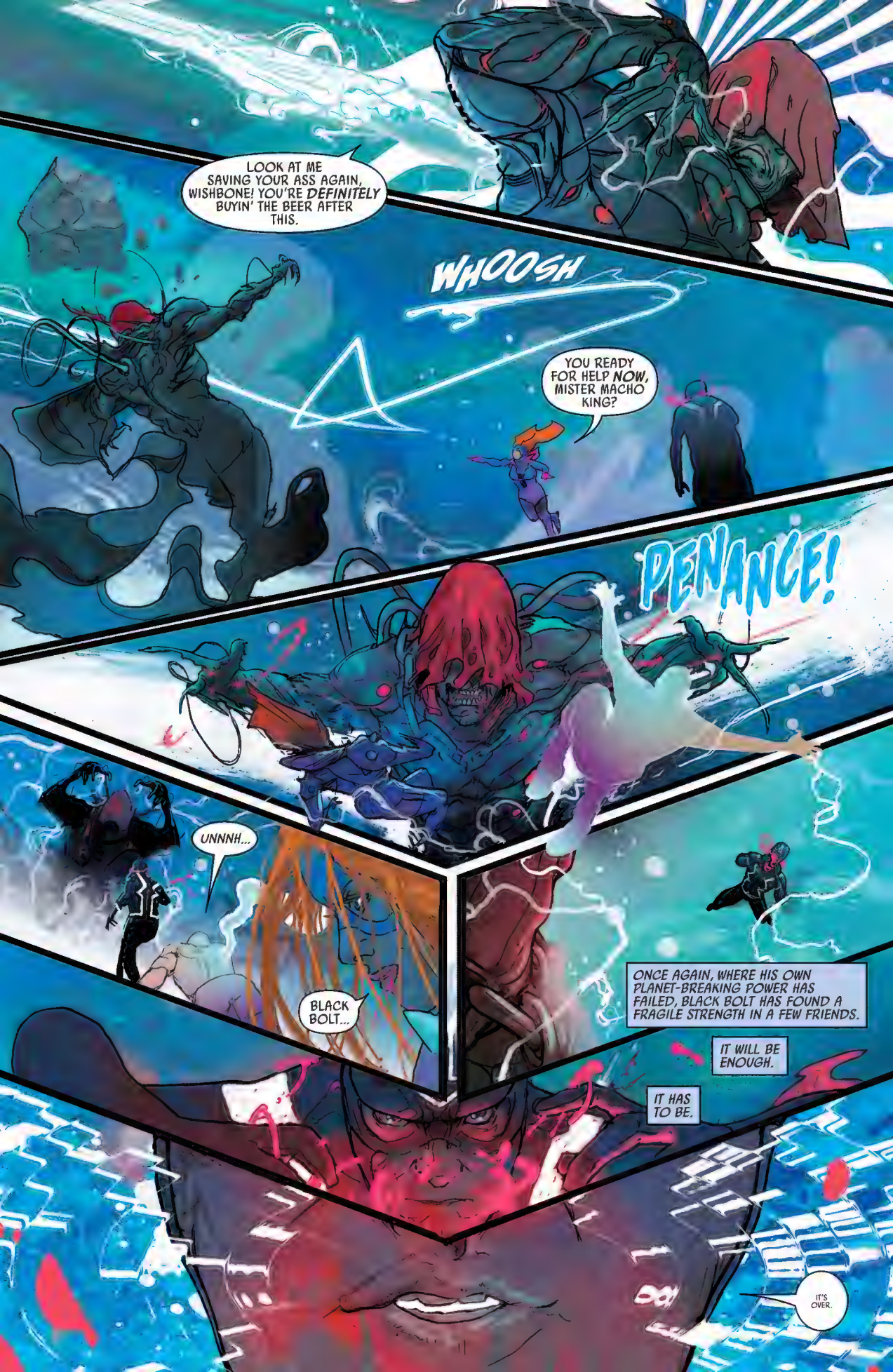
SILENCE!
SILENCE! REPENT
IN SILENCE!

ZZZZZ

Black Bolt's face is shown with a glowing, pinkish-red orb in front of his mouth. He has a determined expression. The background is the same cosmic swirl.

...BLACK BOLT
SPEAKS, AND NO
SOUND EMERGES.

HIS POWER IS NOT
ENOUGH TO SAVE
THOSE HE LOVES.



LOOK AT ME
SAVING YOUR ASS AGAIN,
WISHBONE! YOU'RE DEFINITELY
BUYIN' THE BEER AFTER
THIS.

WHOOSH

YOU READY
FOR HELP NOW,
MISTER MACHO
KING?

PENANCE!

UNNNH...

BLACK
BOLT...

ONCE AGAIN, WHERE HIS OWN
PLANET-BREAKING POWER HAS
FAILED, BLACK BOLT HAS FOUND A
FRAGILE STRENGTH IN A FEW FRIENDS.

IT WILL BE
ENOUGH.

IT HAS
TO BE.

IT'S
OVER.



BLACK BOLT'S VOICE DESTROYS THE JAILER, BUT FOR THE BRIEFEST OF MOMENTS SOMETHING ELSE--SOMEONE ELSE--EMERGES FROM WITHIN THE GRUESOME FIGURE.

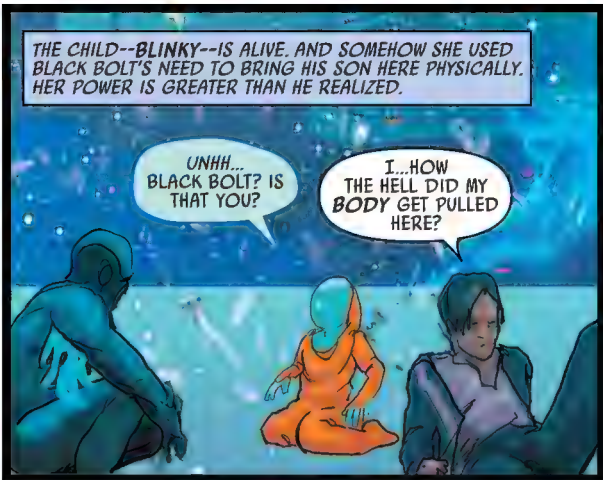
THE NAMELESS PRISONER WHOM BLACK BOLT'S PEOPLE LOCKED AWAY AND FORGOT ALL THOSE CENTURIES AGO. THE MAN WHOM PUNISHMENT MADE A MONSTER.

AS THE LAST BITS OF THE ANCIENT INHUMAN'S ESSENCE ARE BORNE AWAY ON WIND, BLACK BOLT WATCHES WITH SORROW, IF NOT WITH REGRET.

IT IS INDEED OVER.



BUT AT WHAT COST?



UNHH...
BLACK BOLT? IS
THAT YOU?

I...HOW
THE HELL DID MY
BODY GET PULLED
HERE?



BLACK BOLT CAN HARDLY BELIEVE THAT HIS FRIEND CRUSHER IS ALIVE, BUT AFTER SO MANY MISERABLE IMPOSSIBILITIES, HE IS PLEASED TO LAY EYES ON A HAPPY ONE.

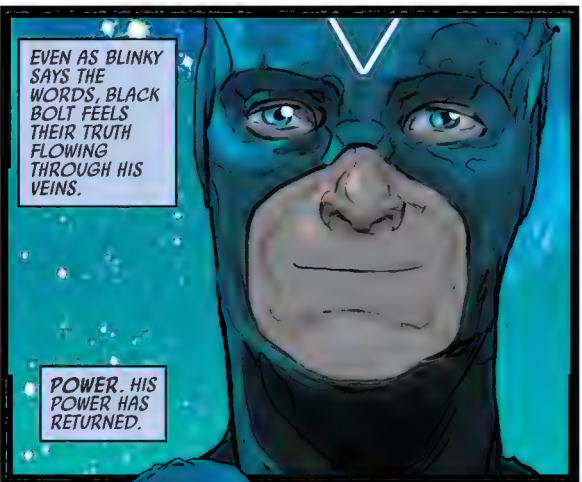
SO
THAT'S IT? THIS
IS REALLY
OVER?



HE'S...HE'S
GONE. REALLY
GONE THIS TIME. BUT
CRUSHER--YOU'RE
ALIVE! YOU'RE
HERE!

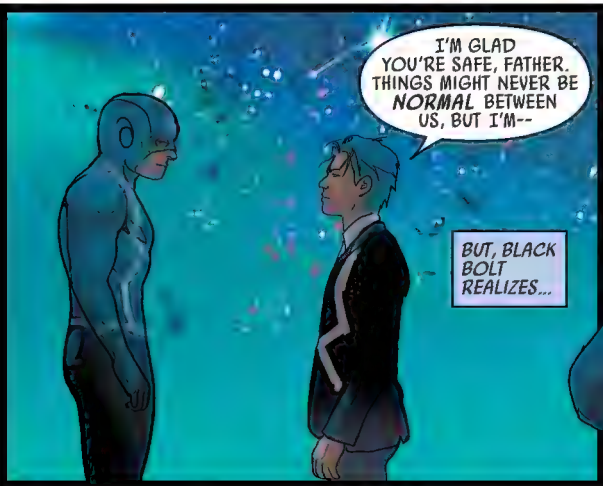
YEAH, KID.
I'M HERE. I TOLD
YA--I'M HARD TO
KILL.

AND BLACK
BOLT! YOU HAVE
YOUR POWER
BACK!



EVEN AS BLINKY
SAYS THE
WORDS, BLACK
BOLT FEELS
THEIR TRUTH
FLOWING
THROUGH HIS
VEINS.

POWER. HIS
POWER HAS
RETURNED.



I'M GLAD
YOU'RE SAFE, FATHER.
THINGS MIGHT NEVER BE
NORMAL BETWEEN
US, BUT I'M--

BUT, BLACK
BOLT
REALIZES...



--I'M
HAPPY YOU'RE
HOME.

...HE HAS ALSO
GAINED A STRENGTH
THAT MATTERS MORE.

THE BRANK.
ONE WEEK
LATER.

CRACK

YOU'RE RIGHT, CRUSHER, I **DON'T** GET IT. BLACK BOLT'S **RICH**. HE OFFERED TO BUY YOU THIS WHOLE BUILDING. I'D TAKE IT IN A MINUTE.

I DON'T TAKE HANDOUTS, KID.

THAT'S RIGHT, YOU &%@\$ NAZIS **BETTER RUN!**

zzzzzzzz

BUT HE THINKS OF IT AS... **REPAYMENT**, NOT CHARITY. YOU SAVED OUR LIVES!

I AIN'T TAKING PAY FOR THAT. SEE, WISHBONE DON'T GET THIS, BUT THAT'S AN **INSULT**. YOU DON'T PAY YOUR FRIENDS FOR HELPING YOU OUT.

SO YOU'LL STEAL, BUT NOT TAKE CHARITY?

DIFFERENT THINGS, KID. YOU KNOW THAT. WHEN YOU SNATCH SOMETHING, THAT'S **WORK**. YOU TOOK IT. DIDN'T NOBODY GIVE IT TO YOU.

WELL, I'VE DONE BOTH. AND BEGGING IS WORK, TOO.



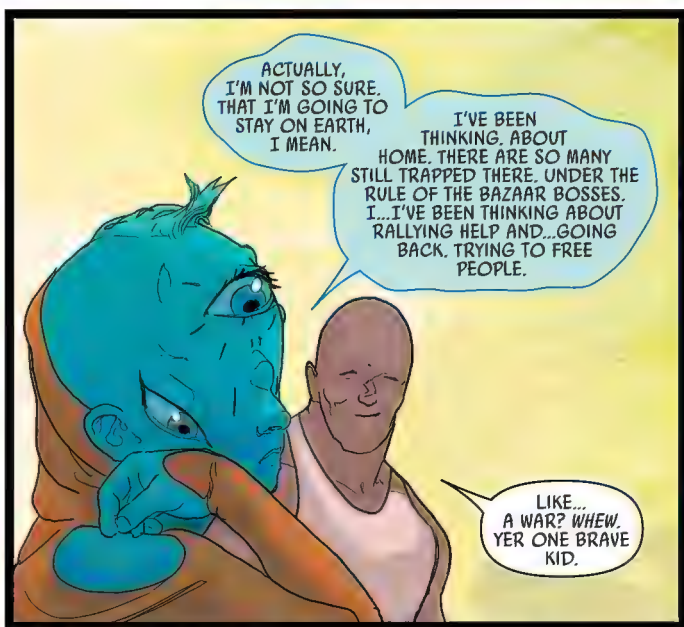
HUH. NEVER
THOUGHT ABOUT IT
THAT WAY. I GUESS
IT IS.

A TANK?
YOU HAVE GOT
TO BE KIDDING
ME!



THIS ICE
CREAM IS GOOD!
WHAT DID YOU SAY
IT'S CALLED?

VANILLA.
IT'S JUST VANILLA.
GEEZ, KID, YOU GOT
A LOT TO LEARN. BUT
YOU'VE GOT TIME,
I GUESS.



ACTUALLY,
I'M NOT SO SURE.
THAT I'M GOING TO
STAY ON EARTH,
I MEAN.

I'VE BEEN
THINKING ABOUT
HOME. THERE ARE SO MANY
STILL TRAPPED THERE. UNDER THE
RULE OF THE BAZAAR BOSSES.
I...I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT
RALLYING HELP AND...GOING
BACK. TRYING TO FREE
PEOPLE.

LIKE...
A WAR? WHEW.
YER ONE BRAVE
KID.



NOT A WAR.
BUT I THINK THERE
ARE ENOUGH OF US
STREET PEOPLE
TO--

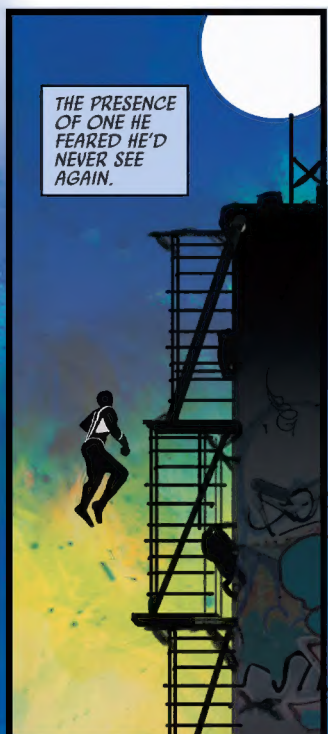
HOLD
ON, KID.



GEEZ, YOU BURNED ANOTHER ONE?
WOW. YOU OWE ME A DOZEN EGGS,
PAL. BUT YOU'LL GET IT. AND
NO USING YOUR
POWERS!



LOOKIT HIS
FACE, MARY! "CURSE YOU,
COSMIC AWARENESS. WHY
DO YOU FAIL ME?" HAW
HAW. I LOVE THIS #&@\$%
GUY...



EACH OF THEM HAS BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH SINCE THEY HAVE LAST SEEN EACH OTHER IN THE WARM-BLOOD WORLD OF LIVING THINGS. BLACK BOLT HAS NO WORDS FOR MEDUSA. SHE HAS NONE FOR HIM.



MERCIFULLY, HE FINDS THAT THEY NEED NONE.



THEY ARE NO LONGER
KING AND QUEEN. NO
LONGER RULER AND
CONSORT. NO LONGER
HUSBAND AND WIFE.

BUT THEY ARE THERE FOR
ONE ANOTHER. THEY ARE
THERE, TOGETHER, TODAY.

AND IF BLACK BOLT
COULD SPEAK, THAT
IS ALL HE WOULD
ASK FOR.

THE END.



SOUND OFF!



This is the end, but we still want to hear from you! Send your emails to mheroes@marvel.com and please mark them "OKAY TO PRINT."

Has it really been a year already!? My goodness, what a ride this has been...

When Editor Wil Moss came to me and asked me if I was interested in writing a Black Bolt book for Marvel, I was thrilled, overwhelmed and a bit baffled. Black Bolt? The extremely serious guy with the little wings and the tuning fork? The guy who never talks? Um, okay...

But this was a chance to tell a story in the MARVEL UNIVERSE, the place that, more than any other, taught me to read and write. A chance to come full circle as an author—how could I not take it?

I'm happier than I can say that I did! Over the past year or so I've come to love his highness Blackagar Boltagon despite (or perhaps because of) all his flaws and oddities, and it's been my great joy to share that love with you all.

But I haven't done it alone! The most humbling and wonderful thing about learning to write comics has been seeing how powerfully collaborative the medium is. It takes a team to make these stories, and I'd like to thank the team that brought you BLACK BOLT:

First and foremost of course is Christian Ward, the artist whose layouts and color choices and facial expressions and explosions and visual gags made this book happen in the most fundamental sense. It's always true that comic artists are co-storytellers, but it's profoundly true with this book as Christian really helped me learn the ropes of visual storytelling as I wrote. I couldn't have asked for a better co-pilot on this crazy spaceship ride.

Clayton Cowles' work on the book was both consummately professional and brilliantly creative, giving every character a truly unique voice and making every sound effect almost audible.

Frazer Irving and Stephanie Hans are very different artists, but each of them thrilled me as they stepped in to add their own powerful takes on the eerie inner and outer space landscapes of BLACK BOLT.

Editors are unsung heroes in any field, but perhaps nowhere so much as in comics, where they are really something damn close to co-writers. This book was blessed by two of the best, Wil Moss and Sarah Brunstad, each of whom brought a meticulous, savvy eye to their work as they whipped the book into shape.

Finally, I'd like to thank you readers! Art isn't just expression—it's communication. Stories mean little without an audience, and I want to thank every one of you who sat around the fire with us as we told this one.

Excelsior!

—Saladin Ahmed

For many artists, doing a Marvel gig is a lifelong ambition. It certainly was for me, but that's not the ambition I want to talk about here. Four years back, I was asked on a podcast interview what my ambition as a comic artist was, and I replied that I wanted to make a comic that would make people cry. So when Wil first told me about Saladin's plan for BLACK BOLT, I knew it would be cool, but what I couldn't have known was that Saladin was going to write the book to make that ambition come to fruition. Saladin has written one of the most emotionally satisfying, heartfelt and human stories I've ever had the privilege to read, let alone draw, and for that I want to thank him. I'm so proud that my first Marvel book has been with you, dude!

Thanks to Clayton, the best letterer in the biz, for making my weird art read like a comic, and to Wil for asking me to do the book in the first place. I especially want to thank Sarah for her organization, support and patience when I became a new dad. Thanks, too, to Frazer and Stephanie for stepping in to give me time to spend with Catherine and little Olive. This last year has been one hell of a ride.

Most of all, though, thank you to each and every person who picked up the book. I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as we enjoyed making it.

—Christian Ward

In case you're wondering, Blinky's real name is "Blinkagar Blunktagon." It's in alien text at the end of issue #1.

Thanks for reading, readers. Double thanks to the team for having me on. You're all swell people and I hope we can do this again sometime.

—Clayton Cowles

Black Bolt's solo adventures may be over for now, but the journey through the Marvel Universe continues for both Saladin and Christian! Be sure to follow them in their next projects. EXILES #1, written by Saladin and drawn by the incredible Javier Rodriguez, goes on sale next week — April 11! If this cover from David Marquez and Matthew Wilson doesn't get you pumped, I don't know what will.



And on June 6, Christian joins superstar writer Jason Aaron on THOR #1 with a tale of King Thor of the far future — and a surprise guest you'll have to see to believe. Check out his variant cover for issue #1! Christian will return for the rest of that story on THOR #5-6. Don't miss 'em!



As for the Silent King, there are big, terrible things to come. Keep an eye out for news of the next chapter of the Inhumans! 'Til then, Boltagons...

—Wil & Sarah

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